



Registered nurse prescribing in the South Island

Fact sheet

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Registered nurses (RNs) working in primary health care and speciality health services who have completed specific educational requirements can now become designated nurse prescribers. These nurses have additional experience, education and training, and are able to prescribe medicines within their area of practice.

What are the benefits of RN prescribing?

- Improved access to treatment
- Enhanced care
- Strengthened inter-professional working practices
- Increased professional satisfaction for nurses¹

Benefits for the community

- Easier for New Zealanders to access the medicines and health care they need, in a safe way
- Easier access to treatment through reduced wait and travel times
- Flexibility to respond to patient needs by enhancing and fully utilising the skills of nurses
- Enhances the patient experience by providing additional support in promoting wellness, preventing disease and managing chronic illness
- Evaluation so far has indicated safe prescribing practice and appropriate referral decisions
- People using the service at available general practices still have the support of the full general practice team (i.e. they are triaged for assessment by the most appropriate practitioner)

Benefits for the health sector (including general practice)

- Best use of our health care resources; allowing doctors and nurse practitioners to focus on more complex patients and spend more time with patients, and making better use of nurses' skills and knowledge base
- Adds to the skill set of interprofessional and collaborative care teams and assists in equitable allocation of the patient care workload
- Evaluation so far has indicated safe prescribing practice and appropriate referral decisions

Benefits for nurses

- Nurse prescribing is an additional aspect of the RN scope of practice that enables nurses to work to the full breadth of this scope and contribute more in a collaborative environment, enhancing professional satisfaction.

¹ Ministry of Health: <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/nursing/developments-nursing/registered-nurse-prescribing>



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How does RN prescribing work in the South Island?

In the South Island, health care is provided by collaborative teams. All RN prescribers are part of a team – they are supported by doctors and other health professionals, and prescribe from a schedule of medicines within their scope of practice.

Relevant legislation and regulations set out by the Nursing Council of New Zealand govern nurse prescribing, and are supported by the South Island RN Prescribing Policy and Framework. As part of this framework, RNs who wish to practice as an RN prescriber must discuss their intentions with their employer and professional nursing leader before commencing study on this pathway.

There are two types of RN prescribing, each with its own requirements that include education, clinical experience and appropriate supervision. This is to ensure medication is prescribed safely, accurately, with appropriate consultation and within a nurse's scope of practice.

The two types of RN prescribers are:

- RN prescribers in **primary health and speciality teams** can prescribe from a schedule of common medicines for a set list of common and long-term conditions
- RN prescribers in **community health** can prescribe from a limited schedule of common medicines from a set list of common conditions (currently being trialled in Counties Manukau Health and Family Planning)

How are RN prescribers different from nurse practitioners?

Nurse practitioners are authorised prescribers under the Medicines Act, alongside doctors, dentists, midwives and optometrists. They have the authority to prescribe any medicines relevant to their areas of practice.

RN prescribers work in collaborative teams within **primary health care and speciality services**. They consult with doctors or nurse practitioners when they need advice on diagnosis or treatment and prescribe for specific conditions only: e.g. diabetes and related conditions, hypertension, respiratory diseases including asthma and COPD, anxiety, depression, heart failure, gout, palliative care, contraception, vaccines, common skin conditions and infections.

Another type of prescribing for RNs working in **community health** is being trialled in Counties Manukau Health and Family Planning. These RN prescribers can prescribe from a limited list of prescription and other medicines, for a range of common conditions: e.g. skin conditions, ear infections, sore throats, sexually transmitted infections, contraceptives, low-level pain relief and preventative or ongoing treatment for rheumatic fever. Most of these medicines are already supplied and administered by nurses under standing orders.

Further information about RN prescribing in the South Island is available here:

www.sialliance.health.nz/RNPrescribing or by contacting kathryn.goodyear@siapo.health.nz.